TESTIMONY OF
CARY TRANTALIS, MSN
BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Friday, February 22, 2013

HB 6350, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015 AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE

Good evening, my name is Cary Trantalis, MSN, and I am the Vice President of Operations for Windham Hospital, and I am testifying in opposition to HB 6350 and its devastating cuts to hospital Medicaid funding.

Windham Hospital serves a rural area of the State, with urban poverty, and significant health care needs for many unable to pay for their care. We are the only Medicare Dependent Hospital in Connecticut, one of 200 nationally, and this means more than 60% of our patients are covered by Medicare in a hospital with less than 100 beds. Our **Medicaid patients** make up a high percentage of the balance, one of the **highest percentages statewide**, and yet, our Medicaid rate is one of the **lowest in the State**. Our need for disproportionate share support is real, and is clearly needed to support our mission of meeting the needs of one of the neediest communities in the State. Its elimination will be devastating.

Our hospital lost $3.8 million in 2011 and half a million in 2012, and we are operating at a loss in excess of $1 million for the first four months of this year.

Over the next three years the total proposed **Medicaid cuts total $4 million** for Windham Hospital, while only a small fraction of the total of $550 million in funding reductions, these cuts are big in a small hospital operating without a margin.

These cuts will clearly put at risk the viability of our hospital and the programs that are meeting the health care needs of those not able to pay for the full cost of their care. Our charity care in 2012 was $3.5 million, we are not confident that this charity care will be eliminated under the Affordable Care Act by July 1, 2014, as is assumed in this budget proposal.

In addition to these cuts, Windham Hospital will continue to pay the **hospital excise tax, $3.7 million** each year, this doesn't make sense now that DSH funding is being eliminated. This burden falls totally on local employer health insurance costs. Clearly this is a promise broken.

Something has to give. Windham is already one of the **lowest cost hospitals** in Connecticut. We are already staffed so efficiently that we are ranked in the **top 25% nationally** for hospitals our size in **staffing efficiency**. We are lean, this is not about reducing fat, and these cuts will surely mean job reductions and service reductions. Most likely it is those programs already losing money, with high numbers of Medicaid, Medicare and uninsured patients that will be most at risk of continuation.

Windham is the second largest employer in our town, and the largest private employer with over **830 people employed**. Job reductions will have a big impact locally.

In my role I oversee the hospital's quality programs. We work hard to meet or exceed national benchmarks, and our emergency room has earned top marks in the State for patient satisfaction and timely evaluation of patients within 30 minutes. When Nemo hit two weeks ago, our emergency management leadership team was on site for 36 hours straight, 40 of our staff spent the night at the hospital to ensure that we were there to meet the acute care needs of the community. Our staff thinks of themselves as **essential**.....we would ask that you do too and reject these proposed drastic reductions in Medicaid funding to hospitals.